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:iation Canadienne-française de l'Alberta

Brief

To the Executive Council of the Province of Alberta

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Introduction

L'Association Canadienne-française de l'Alberta is grateful for this opportunity to present its views to members of the Executive Council of the Province of Alberta on subjects which the Association considers important.

L'Association Canadienne-française de l'Alberta

Established in 1926, this Association pursues the maintenance and development of French culture in our Province. It receives the active support of an ever increasing number of members, not only among Albertans of French Canadian ancestry but also from citizens of other racial origins.

By pursuing its cultural and linguistic goals, our Association believes that it has a major role to play in the development of a true Canadian culture. Those who have chosen to maintain and develop Canada's identity and unity acknowledge that the French fact is an important element in counteracting the powerful assimilative forces in American culture. The developments on the national scene during the last decade in establishing the two official languages clearly indicate the wide support in this country for this position.

This dimension of Canadian life imposes a double responsibility on both English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians, namely: to ensure the maximum development of the language and culture of their own official language group and to facilitate the development of those of the other official language group.

Consequently, in the exercise of this important mandate, our Association must count upon the support of English-speaking citizens, if it is to be success-

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ful. Because of the minority situation of French Canadians, particularly in Alberta, the Association must also receive substantial support from the various levels of government.

"Multiculturalism"

Conscious as it is of the contribution which ethnic groups have made and can make to the development of Canadian culture, our Association favours "multiculturalism". It wishes to underline, however, the existence of important differences between the multicultural "fact" on the one hand and the French "fact" on the other. For historical and "political" reasons, the French language is one of the official languages in Canada. Accordingly, it is entitled to some priority in every province, regardless of population figures.

Purpose of this Brief

This brief is, therefore, intended to place before the Executive Council the various problems we face and in the solution of which help is required. In this first official contact with the members of Council, we will, however, give more importance to matters concerning education and culture.

Education

The importance of our educational system in the development of the French language and culture need not be established. Indeed, the Legislature of Alberta, after receiving requests from our Association and others, amended the School Act so as to permit more teaching of French and the use of French as a language of instruction. But to be effective, the enactment requires concrete support.

Principally, those who are called upon to apply the law must be properly motivated or, failing that, they must be given clear and precise instructions.

Local school authorities may lack the necessary enthusiasm and may even be prejudiced against the aims of the above-mentioned legislation. In these circumstances, we submit that it is the responsibility of a provincial government to intervene so that the recognized educational rights will be respected.

To facilitate the harmonious application of school laws, it might be necessary, in certain areas, to adjust the geographical limits of school districts. For example, there are areas in which it would be relatively easy to regroup centres of French speaking population so that the School Act could be more easily applied and the atmosphere of the school could more fully reflect the French culture of its students. Another important element with respect to access to this type of school is often the question of student transportation.

School Libraries and Pre-School Education

Our Association deplores the fact that the quality and quantity of French books in many school libraries is sadly lacking. To remedy this situation, our Association has on occasion been obliged to organize collections of French books among our fellow citizens of other provinces. We have also addressed requests for books to the Government of France. Our Association is also deeply concerned about French pre-school education, a problem which we consider to be of prime importance because of its social and pedagogical repercussions.

Teacher Education

Another area which we consider very important is that of professional education of teachers. This education should provide not only adequate mastery of French as a language, but also specialized professional education. The great majority of teachers using French as a language of instruction in Alberta have received their training either in one of the former Normal Schools or in a Faculty of Education in Alberta. Notwithstanding their very best intentions,

they recognize that they are not properly equipped to teach French as a language and to use French as a language of instruction. We, therefore, request that the Department of Education offer incentives to these teachers to improve their preparation by attending summer courses or even regular courses of instruction at Collège Universitaire St.Jean in Edmonton, in the Province of Quebec or even in France.

Collège Universitaire St. Jean

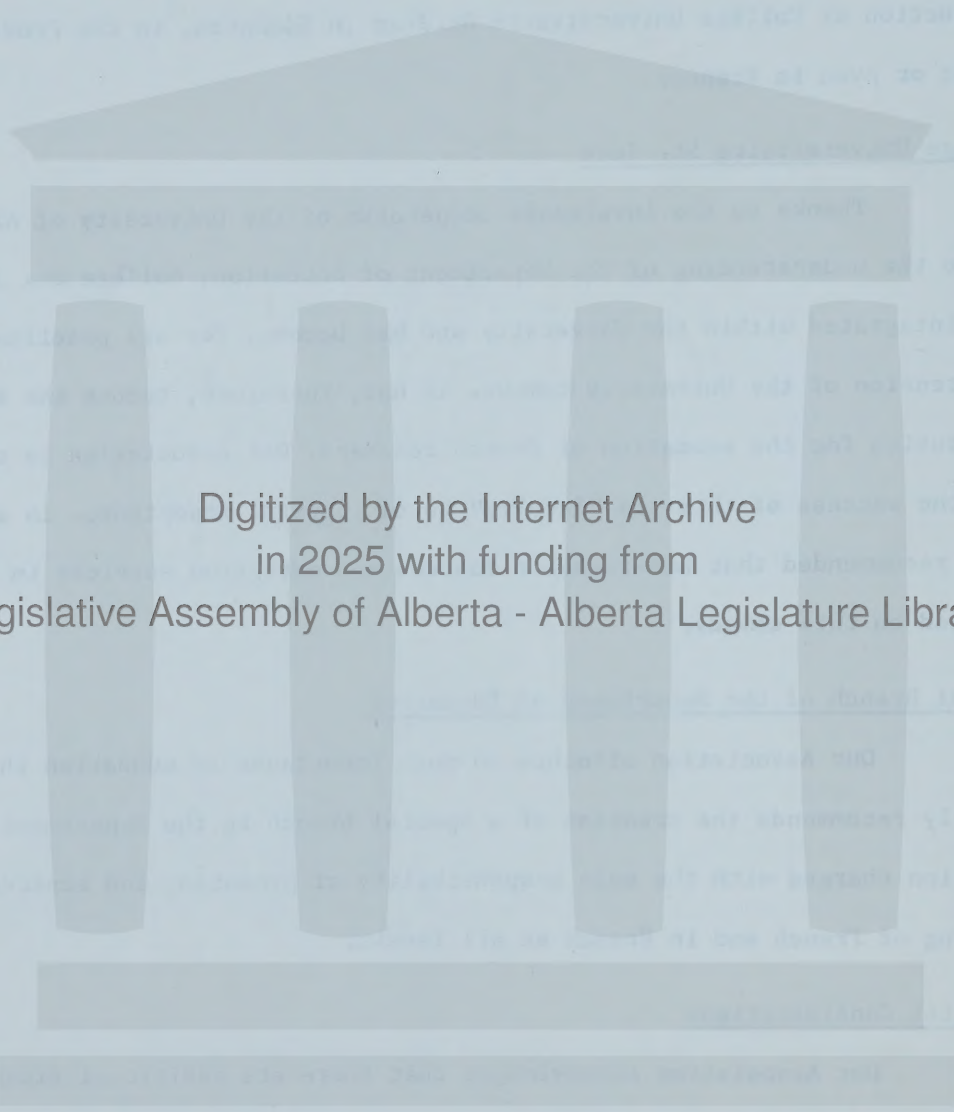
Thanks to the invaluable cooperation of the University of Alberta and to the understanding of the Department of Education, Collège St. Jean has been integrated within the University and has become, for all practical purposes, an extension of the University campus. It has, therefore, become the ideal institution for the education of French teachers, Our Association is convinced that the success of this new "faculty" is of capital importance. In addition, it is recommended that non-transfer courses and extension services in French be provided on this campus.

Special Branch of the Department of Education

Our Association attaches so much importance to education that it strongly recommends the creation of a special branch in the Department of Education charged with the sole responsibility of promoting and supervising the teaching of French and in French at all levels.

Financial Considerations

Our Association acknowledges that there are additional financial burdens involved in providing an adequate education in both official languages. These additional burdens are the subject of Federal programs which do not appear to have been either fully utilized or adpated to the needs of this Province. Our Association could assist the Federal and Provincial authorities in resolving



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the difficulties encountered in this delicate and involved area. Recent soundings carried out by the Association reveal that "Education in French" is an important objective for many francophone Albertans who also feel that authorities at various levels have not exhausted all available solutions.

Cultural Development

In areas which may be strictly cultural, our Association will seek a very close relationship with the Department of Youth, Culture and Recreation. French culture in Canada is vigorous and relies on no foreign country for its evolution. We intend to develop it in Alberta and to seek the help of that Department on this behalf.

Conclusion

This brief has been couched in very general terms and deliberately so. It is intended to serve as an introduction of our Association to the Executive Council. A submission to the Cabinet Committee on Education has been prepared and a copy thereof is attached to outline the more detailed views of our Association in the field of Education.

Respectfully submitted,

L'Association Canadienne-française
de l'Alberta

December 6th., 1972.